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ABSTRACT

A review is presented of recent literature concerning teachers' attitudes toward inservice programs. One of the studies concluded that items that teachers like at inservice meetings are: (1) active involvement; (2) teaching; (3) practical information; (4) meetings that are short and to the point; (5) in-depth treatment of one concept; (6) well organized meetings; (7) variety; (8) an incentive to come; (9) occasional inspirational speakers; and (10) to visit other schools to observe other teachers. Other studies maintained that teachers disliked all inservice programs or had conflicting attitudes. There appeared to be general agreement that inservice programs should be planned cooperatively between teachers and administrators and evaluated on mutually agreed upon and understood criteria. Teachers indicated approval of programs that are problem based and task centered, as well as activity oriented, systematic, continuous, and individualized. An important factor was that programs be flexible and site specific. Extension college courses seemed to be more popular than campus courses. The factors of distance from home, individual needs, and the reputation of the course and instructor were important. Salary increase was a universal motivation for teachers seeking inservice programs. Researchers have concluded that, for the most part, teachers recognize their own weaknesses and volunteer for inservice training which addresses their needs. (JD)

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TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD IN-SERVICE PROGRAMS

by

Al Theis, Jr.

The purpose of this article is to review some of the recent literature concerning teachers' attitudes toward in-service programs. Being a teacher myself and knowing many of my colleagues' thoughts, it is easy to surmise that teachers feel ambivalent toward in-service programs. On the one hand, most teachers likely have a desire to grow professionally; on the other hand, they are likely to be bombarded with many pressures from all sides. These pressures: home, papers to correct, lesson plans, being on their feet all day, etc.; cause teachers to be quite critical of many in-service programs. The available literature reflects this ambivalence.

Blatt (1981) gives us a "common sense definition" for in-service education: "...an attempt to help people who already work in the schools do better work. (p. 103)" But he goes on to point out that "training is a more accurate label of what's going on...little education (in the sense of its Latin root meaning, to lead forth) is accomplished during in-service education programs for teachers." He explains his point and then gives his recommendation: "I believe teachers need what professors need, an awakening interest in learning

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for its own sake, scholarship for the thrills and enjoyment it provides, and encouragement to create rather than implement educational environments. (p. 104)"

Herein lies some of the ambivalence in the literature: while suggesting these lofty prescriptions, Blatt (1981) also cites one of his studies on what teachers want: "We concluded that teachers want to know how best to handle specific classroom situations. (p. 103)" A very concrete desire for effectiveness is revealed in teachers' attitudes.

There seems to be a division between what some people feel teachers need and the evidence found concerning what teachers want. Lansdowne and Jennings allude to this when they report: "Research suggests that effective in-service training should be continuous, on-going, and job related in a way that trainees understand the connection between work and training (Webster, 1978); however, not all in-service training has these characteristics."

Smith and Haley (1981) give components of successful in-service programs which seem to bridge the division between what teachers "need" as others see it and what they want: "...include collaborative planning by university faculties and local school personnel, teacher leadership, relevance of the program to actual classroom activities... (p. 189)"

Editors at Prentice Hall, Inc. (1975) suggest that opinions of teachers should be consulted when planning in-service programs: "No program planned primarily for teachers will be successful unless in a large measure it is their program... Be sure that teachers "control" the committee. (for planning) (p. 106)" This suggests taking teachers' attitudes into account. Smith and Haley (1981), however, caution that "attitudes and opinions alone form a poor basis for in-service programs."

Davies and Armistead (1965) outline ten items that teachers seem to like at in-service meetings:

1. active involvement
2. demonstration teaching
3. practical information
4. meetings that are short and to the point
5. in depth treatment of <u>one</u> concept
6. well organized meetings
7. variety
8. an incentive to come
9. occasional inspirational speakers
10. to visit other schools to observe other teachers (p. 13)

In three statements, Ruff (1974) establishes conversely that teachers seem to hate in-service programs.

> "...ask yourself these questions: a.) Why do classroom teachers resent, ridicule, or when possible, dissociate themselves from workshops? b.) Why does all the research compiled on in-service education show that there is virtually no impact or change in teacher behavior as evidenced in classroom instructions? c.) Why has it become necessary for many school districts to make in-service attendance for teachers mandatory...(p. 506-507)"

In 1974, Brimm and Tollett reported on a study whose purpose was to ascertain teachers' attitudes toward in-service programs. Using a stratified proportional sample, they surveyed 2% of the teachers in every school district in Tennessee. Teacher opinions were obtained by means of a scaled series of 34 statements regarding in-service education programs. Their conclusions were that the study substantiated the notion that in-service programs were poorly planned, inadequately executed and lacking in proper evaluative procedures. Furthermore, determination of the needs of the teachers within a school system seems prerequisite to the planning of meaningful in-service education programs. Two statements being the most strongly endorsed by teachers were: a.) The teacher should have the opportunity to select the kind of in-service activities which he feels will strengthen his professional competence; and 2.) Teachers should be involved in the development of purposes, activities and methods of evaluation for in-service programs.

Ogletree and Allen (1976) studied the opinions of inner city Chicago teachers in regard to in-service meetings. Theirs was a random sample of teachers from five inner city schools. Using a

revised form of the questionnaire developed by Brimm and Tollett, they found that all teachers were basically dissatisfied with in-service meetings. Of the teachers surveyed, 73% considered teacher involvement was insufficient, while 86% indicated there was marginal or no evaluative follow-up to the in-service meetings. Seventy-one percent thought the meetings were irrelevant to their needs, with 56% feeling the meetings were useless. Ogletree and Allen (1976) concluded that in-service meetings should be:

1. Planned cooperatively between teachers and administrators.
2. Problem based and task centered.
3. Activity oriented, systematic and continuous.
4. Individualized.
5. Evaluated based on mutually agreed upon and understood criteria.
6. Flexible and modifiable to all participants' needs.

Joyce et al. (1976) studied what teachers and administrators prefer for in-service teacher education. The sample was a non-random, exploratory, preliminary type for a later planned survey. Using loosely structured interviews, they found all types of educators with the desire for teachers to have more responsibility for the content of in-service programs and all were concerned about the need to relate to the local situation. The "timeliness" of the program was also seen as an important aspect to be considered.

Johnston and Leakey (1977) compared a sample of 313 teachers with 23 administrators from 17 schools in New Jersey as to their

preferences in content, methods and planning strategies for teacher staff development programs. They found a significant disagreement on content preferences as well as who should plan in-service programs. Administrators felt they themselves should plan them, while teachers felt themselves and committees would be the best choice. The authors of the study concluded that the most effective would be workshops planned by both teachers and administrators.

In a study to determine elementary teachers' attitudes toward in-service meetings, Ogletree and Dunbar (1979) surveyed 48 randomly selected teachers from inner city Chicago schools. All teachers surveyed said they feel they should be involved in the planning of in-service meetings. Sixty-six percent felt in-service meetings were not relevant to their needs and 79% felt these meetings were not well planned. They conclude that in-service meetings should include:

1. research based information
2. relevant goal setting and activities
3. teacher participation and evaluation.

Yarger et al. (1980) have studied the question: "What motivates teachers to sign up for in-service courses?" A total of 650 elementary and secondary educators were randomly chosen from school districts within 50 miles of Syracuse University. They found:

1. teachers are more likely to enroll in extension college courses than in main campus ones.
2. distance from home was important.
3. courses tailored to the needs of their own schools were preferred.

4. salary increase was a motivation.

5. reputation of the course and instructor was an important factor.

They concluded that it was wise to schedule extension courses and to tailor make courses for individual schools' needs.

Cross (1981) asked the question: "Do teachers know their own in-service needs and will they participate in programs designed to meet these stated needs?" He studied teachers in one Texas school district. Teachers first were asked their preference for topics at in-service programs and then were monitored to see if they actually signed up for programs designed to meet the stated preferences. Principals of these teachers were then asked to rate their teachers on areas which programs had been planned. Discipline was one topic evaluated in this way. For teachers rated poor or fair in discipline, 47% had expressed an interest in the topic, with 27% of these actually enrolling in the course. Of the teachers rated "good" on discipline, 28% showed a preference for the course, with 19% of these actually enrolling. Of teachers rated "excellent" on discipline, only 11% indicated a preference for the topic, with 11% actually enrolling. Cross concludes that teachers recognize their own weaknesses and to a lesser extent also volunteer for in-service training which addresses those needs.

Wilson and Blum (1981) studied how much teachers actually use information and ideas presented in in-service programs. They did

classroom observation and teacher interviews with 31 teachers from four schools which had participated in in-service training on 14 teaching strategies two years before. Eight of the 14 teaching strategies were considered "in evidence" or "prominent" in at least 20% of the classrooms. They concluded that in-service leaders could gauge the effectiveness of their programs by classroom observation and teacher interviews.

The literature shows many different views on teachers' opinions of in-service meetings. Generally, teachers do not like in-service meetings unless they feel they are relevant to their needs and their situation. Teachers are not easy to please, but the literature indicates that it is possible not only to please them but make the in-services' goals effective for all involved.

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